

Many brain tumor patients use homeopathy, alternative treatments

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Many people with incurable brain tumors use alternative therapies, such as taking vitamins and homeopathy, in addition to their conventional treatments, according to a study published in the December 14, 2010, print issue of *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

About 40 percent of brain tumor patients in the study used [alternative therapies](#) including homeopathic remedies, vitamin supplements and psychological therapy.

"The use of these alternative treatments may be largely overlooked and underestimated," said study author Oliver Heese, MD, and [neurosurgeon](#) with the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf in Germany. "Doctors need to be aware of patients' desire to seek alternative treatments and encourage an open discussion of options. Their guidance may be much appreciated, especially when some treatments are dubious, expensive or potentially harmful."

The study involved 621 people with incurable grade II to grade IV gliomas who completed questionnaires about their use of alternative therapies. Alternative therapy was defined as methods or compounds not used in routine clinical practice and not scientifically evaluated.

Younger people, women, and those with more education were more likely to use alternative treatments than older people, men and those with less education.

"The majority of people are turning to alternative treatments not because they are dissatisfied with their conventional care, but because they wish to add something beneficial to their care," Heese said.

From a list of reasons for using alternative treatments, the most commonly chosen responses were "to support conventional therapy," "to build up body resistance" and "to do something for the treatment by myself." The least commonly chosen responses were "because I am afraid of the conventional methods" and "because the physicians don't have enough time."

Of those who used alternative treatments, 39 percent used homeopathy, 31 percent used [vitamin supplements](#) and 29 percent used various psychological methods.

Provided by American Academy of Neurology

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